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The Building Blocks of Leadership

Training and educating people to lead.

Communities are faced with challenges requiring strong, innovative and skilled leaders to deal with social issues that often impede community growth and development. A lack of education, leadership abilities and communication skills often discourage people from tackling community or professional leadership roles. Land-Grant Universities and USDA are working on leadership programs to prepare and motivate people toward public service on boards, commissions and community service projects.

Payoff

- **Grassroots leadership.** A **Wyoming** Extension leadership program prepared 19 people for elected positions. Eighty percent of participants said the eight-week leadership development curriculum was beneficial, and six moved into leadership positions. The program began after citizens in Laramie County had difficulty recruiting qualified candidates to run for elected positions. Participants said they gained communication and goal-setting skills and can more effectively collaborate with others. In Tennessee, residents need skills in addressing social issues in their community. **Tennessee** Extension has trained 460 leaders through Community Voices. This also will enable people already in leadership roles to strengthen their organizations. **South Carolina State** Extension trained and organized community residents to provide leadership in four neighborhoods. The neighborhood associations will address housing, drug-related issues and community problems, and implement strategies to address other issues.
- **Ready for jobs.** **Florida A&M** students have an inside track on jobs and leadership positions when they join BASE – Biological and Agricultural Systems Engineering. Twenty students found internships and co-op opportunities since joining the program. Scholarships and summer jobs attract high school academic achievers to the program. **South Dakota State** Extension established a Biostress Center of Excellence to involve students in leadership, problem-solving and critical thinking. Program participants scored in the top 10 percent on national assessment exams, and 31 percent are involved in

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leadership roles or have made presentations at regional or national meetings.

- **Leading the way.** Low-income minority kids are building social skills, developing self-esteem and improving their math and science skills through the Young Scholars program at the **University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff**. Eighty-five percent of the participants made the honor roll, and 96 children and their families completed the program. **Arizona** Extension's teen leadership camp promotes building trust, leadership and communication skills. Journey of Opportunities for Leaders of Tomorrow (JOLT), increases student leadership skills and helps establish lifelong friendships. One participant said, "JOLT has taught me so many things. I have made the friends of a lifetime and have learned so many skills in becoming a great leader." **Purdue** Extension sponsored Leadership 2000 for sophomores and juniors nominated by their high schools as emerging leaders. Eighty percent of participants said they now are comfortable taking on leadership roles in school organizations. With skills in team building, public speaking and goal setting, these students are stepping up to leadership positions.
- **Giving back to the community.** A **Georgia** undergraduate course promotes community service, leadership and teamwork. Students must implement a service project addressing community needs. Some students taught youth about agriculture, while others visited senior centers and provided food to the elderly. With 70 participants, each student gained leadership and service knowledge that improved community life.

- **Global outlook.** Traveling abroad enables international students to prepare for leadership positions in a global society. The Global Studies Program at **Arkansas** promotes international study, internship opportunities and collaborative research. Seven students are involved in an international agribusiness exchange between Arkansas and the Scottish Agricultural College. Since the program began in 1996, more than 75 students have participated in internships and study programs in 12 European countries, Australia and Mexico. The international program prepares students to address cultural and economic issues, world trade and agriculture.



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